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Status of Day Care in Canada 1991

**A Review of the Major Findings
of the National Day Care Study 1991**

National Child Care Information Centre
Child Care Programs Division

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Canada

Preface

Status of Day Care in Canada 1991 is intended to present a general overview of day care services in Canada.

The study was undertaken by the Social Service Programs Branch, Health and Welfare Canada, with the co-operation of provincial authorities.

If you have any comments on *Status of Day Care in Canada 1991*, please contact the National Child Care Information Centre, Social Service Programs Branch, Health and Welfare Canada, Finance Building, Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 1B5 (613) 954-8258.

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Major Findings

Increase in Day Care Spaces

Since 1971, the first year Health and Welfare Canada gathered data on national day care, there has been significant growth in the number of day care spaces. In 1971 there were 17,391 spaces. In 1991 there were 333 082 spaces. This represents a nineteen-fold increase.

Each subsequent year has shown a rate of growth between 10% and 16%, with only a few exceptions. The rate of growth in 1990 dropped to 7.56%. This downward trend continued in 1991 to 3.89%. This is the lowest rate of growth since 1978.

The number of full-time day care spaces in Canada in 1991 was 333 082. This is an increase of 12 458.

Centre care spaces increased by 9 873.

Family day care spaces increased by 2 585.

However, the growth rate is not as poor as the overall figures might suggest. The provinces of Ontario and Alberta account for about 55% of the day care spaces in Canada. Both provinces experienced a very low growth rate over 1990 and have consequently brought down the national figures. Three of the four Maritime provinces experienced a growth rate of between 11% and 15%. With the exception of Saskatchewan, all the other provinces and territories experienced a growth rate between 5.7% and 11%.

Table 1 indicates the growth of centre and family day care spaces by year.

The overall rate of growth in 1991 was 3.89% compared to 7.56% in 1990.

The rate of growth for family day care over 1990 was 6.8%.

The rate of growth for centre day care over 1990 was 3.5%.

Age Groups Served by Day Care Programs

As indicated in Table 2, the availability of day care services differs according to the age of the child.

As in the past, day care centre spaces are primarily being used by children between the ages of three and six years. The spaces available to this age group account for 162 845 or 55.7% of the total day care centre spaces.

Only 56 134 or 19.2% of centre spaces are filled by children under the age of three. This contrasts with the Family Day Care program where there are 16 051 spaces (39.4%) serving children under three.

School-age day care spaces account for 79 964, down from 95 713 in 1990. School-age day care now constitutes 24% of the day care spaces.

Sponsorship of Day Care Centres

In 1968, 75% of all day care spaces were under commercial auspices. The percentage of commercial spaces dropped over the years but for the past few years has been fairly stable – between 38% and 43%. However, in 1990, the non-profit sector reached a high of 65.76%. This trend continues into 1991.

Non-profit centre spaces grew by 11 441 spaces and now represent 67.45% of the total day care centre spaces.

The commercial sector decreased by 1578 spaces and represents 32.55% of centre spaces.

Tables 3 and 4 show the distribution and relative growth of day care spaces under different types of sponsorship.

Day Care Spaces by Province and Territory

Table 5 shows full-time centre spaces and family day care spaces by province, and Table 6 provides provincial comparison by auspice.

Full-time Day Care Spaces in Canada in Relation to the Number of Day Care Age Children of Parents in the Labour Market

The mandate for *Status of Day Care in Canada* has been to show the year-by-year growth patterns in day care.

However, there has always been some interest in relating these findings to the degree of unmet need. The data provided by the provinces does not lend itself directly to this type of analysis. To address this question, the early Status of Day Care in Canada reports compared the number of full-time day care spaces to the number of children of mothers who were in the labour force. The problem with this approach is that many mothers work part-time and do not require a full-time day care space. This creates an exaggerated impression of the degree of unmet need.

On the other hand, if only the data on children of two parents who work full-time are considered, actual need may be under-estimated, in that a parent working 20 hours a week would not likely find a part-time day care space to match the hours needed for care.

Consequently, Status of Day Care in Canada now uses a format which presents four separate compilations estimating the percentage of children who can be served by existing day care spaces. The four separate compilations are for children 0-17 months; children between 18 months and 35 months; children age 3 to 5 inclusive and children between 6 and 12 years.

The above-mentioned approach compares only the number of full-time day care spaces to the number of children by various ages where the parents are involved in one of the four categories. It should not be construed to relate to the number of children whose parents would choose a formalized day care setting if it were made available.

Tables 7, 8, 9 and 10 relate the four categories and parental work situations to the percentage of full-time day care spaces available.

The existing evidence of parental preference is sketchy at best, but it does seem to suggest that about 50% of those not using formalized care would do so if provided the opportunity. However, a number of variables need to be researched before definitive statements can be made.

Another consideration is the impact of full-time kindergarten and part-time junior kindergarten in the school system on the demand for day care.

Table 2 shows that the percentage of spaces available for five-year-olds and, to a lesser extent, for four-year-olds is significantly lower than for three-year-olds. Some provinces and territories have difficulty reporting the actual number of children in their centres by age and some of the figures in this table are best estimates. The age breakdown is much less reliable than are the data on the number of spaces available by auspice.

Table 1 – Distribution of Centre Spaces, Family Day Care Spaces and Day Care Centres by Year

Number of Spaces	March 31 1971	March 31 1980	March 31 1985	March 31 1990	March 31 1991	Increase Over 1990	
						No.	%
Centre Spaces	16 791	98 238	169 751	282 465	292 338	9 873	3.5
Family Day Care Spaces	600	10 903	22 623	38 159	40 744	2 585	6.8
Total Spaces	17 391	109 141	192 374	320 624	333 082	12 458	3.89
Day Care Centres	682	2 719	4 685	7 712	7 283	(429)	(5.56)

Table 2 – Spaces in Day Care Centres and Family Day Care Homes by Age of Children Served (1991)

Ages*	Day Care Centres		Family Day Care Homes	
	No.	%	No.	%
0-17 mos.	22 341	7.64	7 466	18.32
18-35 mos.	33 793	11.56	8 585	21.07
3 years	62 530	21.39	6 146	15.08
4 years	63 076	21.58	6 098	14.97
5 years	37 239	12.74	5 844	14.34
6-10 years	69 848	23.89	6 095	14.96
10-12 years	3 511	1.20	510	1.25
Total	292 338	100.00	40 744	100.00

*Some provinces/territories are not able to provide breakdowns by age and in such cases, estimates have been provided.

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding

Table 3 – Sponsorship of Centre Spaces 1979, 1985 and 1991

Type of Sponsorship	1979		1985		1991	
	Spaces	% of Spaces	Spaces	% of Spaces	Spaces	% of Spaces
Non-Profit	42 534	50.59	106 131	62.52	197 193	67.45
Commercial	41 549	49.41	63 631	37.48	95 145	32.55
Total	84 083	100.00	169 762	100.00	292 338	100.00

Table 4 – Sponsorship of Centre Spaces 1990 and 1991

Type of Sponsorship	1990 Spaces	1991 Spaces	Increase	
			No.	%
Non-Profit	185 742	197 193	11 451	6.17
Commercial	96 723	95 145	(1 578)	(1.63)
Total	282 465	292 338	9 873	3.5

Table 5 – Interprovincial Comparison of Day Care Spaces

Provinces	Centre Spaces	Family Day Care Spaces	Centres
Newfoundland	2 680	-	85
Prince Edward Island	2 183	60	53
Nova Scotia	6 649	133	180
New Brunswick	5 909	96	181
Quebec	74 301	7 673	1 555
Ontario	108 866	13 000	2 800
Manitoba	10 942	3 126	285
Saskatchewan	3 880	2 416	27
Alberta	55 043	5 692	1 521
British Columbia	20 476	8 336	548
Northwest Territories	769	80	28
Yukon	640	132	20
National Totals	292 338	40 744	7 283

Total Spaces: 333 082

Table 6 – Interprovincial Comparison of Day Care Centre Spaces by Auspice

Provinces/Territories	Non-Profit	Commercial	Total
Newfoundland	750	1 930	2 680
Prince Edward Island	1 099	1 084	2 183
Nova Scotia	3 882	2 767	6 649
New Brunswick	3 186	2 723	5 909
Quebec	63 356	10 945	74 301
Ontario	79 593	29 273	108 866
Manitoba	9 933	1 009	10 942
Saskatchewan	3 853	27	3 880
Alberta	19 732	35 311	55 043
British Columbia	10 688	9 788	20 476
Northwest Territories	637	132	769
Yukon	484	156	640
National Totals	197 193	95 145	292 338

Table 7 – Infant Day Care – Children 0-17 Months

Category of Parent	Number of Children	% of Children Served
Mothers in labour force	344 731	8.64
Full-time working parents (1)	168 130	17.72
Full-time working parents (2) plus students	177 009	16.83
Full-time working parents plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week (3)	220 788	13.50

As of March 1991, there were 29 807 full-time day care spaces for children 0-17 months of age. As can be seen from the above four compilations, the percentage of children these spaces can serve differs according to which groups of parents are included in the compilation.

Table 8 – Children between the Ages of 18 - 36 Months (inclusive)

Category of Parent	Number of Children	% of Children Served
Mothers in labour force	341 670	12.40
Full-time working parents (1)	165 146	25.66
Full-time working parents (2) plus students	176 692	23.98
Full-time working parents plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week (3)	225 370	18.80

As of March 1991, there were 42 378 full-time day care spaces for children between the ages of 18 months and 36 months.

Table 9 – Children between the Ages of 3 and 6 Years

Category of Parent	Number of Children	% of Children Served
Mothers in labour force	690 457	23.59
Full-time working parents (1)	337 826	48.20
Full-time working parents (2) plus students	365 305	44.58
Full-time working parents plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week (3)	465 313	35.00

As of March 1991, there were 180 933 day care spaces for children between the ages of 3 and 6 years.

Notes

1. This category includes lone parents working full time, and includes two-parent families in which both parents work full time.
2. This category includes full-time working parents, lone parents who are full-time students, two-parent families in which one parent works full time and the other is a full-time student, and two-parent families in which both parents are full-time students.
3. This category includes full-time working parents, student-parents, lone parents who work 20 to 29 hours a week, two-parent families in which one parent works full time and the other works 20 to 29 hours a week, two-parent families in which both parents work 20 to 29 hours a week, and two-parent families in which one parent works 20 to 29 hours a week and the other is a full-time student.

Table 10 – Children between the Ages of 6 and 13 Years

Category of Parent	Number of Children	% of Children Served
Mothers in labour force	1 776 873	4.13
Full-time working parents (1)	996 073	7.6
Full-time working parents (2) plus students	1 033 373	7.1
Full-time working parents plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week (3)	1 287 872	5.7

As of March 1991, there were 79 964 day care spaces for school-age children.

Glossary

Auspice – Sponsorship and/or the responsibility for the day care program, i.e. non-profit community board or commercial operator.

Centre care – Care given to groups of children in a licensed day care centre.

Commercial centre – A licensed day care centre that is set up as a proprietary operation. The term describes larger franchise operations, as well as the small, individually owned centres.

Community Board centre – A licensed day care centre that is established as a non-profit organization and is governed by a community board of directors.

Day care facility – For the purposes of this report, a licensed or provincially approved centre or private home providing care for children outside of their own home for eight to ten hours a day.

Family day care – A program involving the selection and supervision by a government or authorized private agency of private families who give care to children during the day.

Infant day care – Care provided by a day care centre or a family day care home for children under the age of two.

Latch-key child – School-age child of working parents who carries house keys to gain entrance to home after school and before parents return from work.

Non-profit day care – For the purposes of this report, includes both community board centres and co-operative day care programs.

Preschool day care – Care provided by a day care centre or a family day care home for children aged two to six.

Private or casual day care arrangements – Arrangements between the parent and the provider, such as those involving a private baby-sitter, which are not under the supervision of a licensing authority or day care agency.

Public day care – A licensed day care centre owned and operated by a municipal or provincial government.

School-age day care – Supervision of young school-age children before school begins, during the noon hour, after class, and on days when school is not in session.